



FEB 16 2006

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Mr. Joshua S. Reichert  
The Pew Charitable Trusts  
2005 Market Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103-7077

Dear Mr. Reichert:

Thank you for your letter and request for a meeting regarding a proposed National Marine Sanctuary in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI).

The National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is reviewing several management and regulatory alternatives for a proposed sanctuary. NOAA currently is preparing a draft environmental impact statement, draft management plan, and proposed regulations. NOAA expects to make a final decision on the designation after gathering and considering public comments on the proposal.

NOAA appreciates your continued interest and support in the designation of this important area as a National Marine Sanctuary. We also appreciate your views on the need for strong protection measures, and compensation for the eight remaining bottomfish vessel holders to end commercial fishing in the NWHI. Please note, however, that while we are willing to meet with you and hear the views of your organization, we will be precluded from engaging in a discussion of those views because of the status of the current deliberative process.

I also take this opportunity to encourage you to continue to participate in the designation process, and to comment on the draft environmental impact statement, draft management plan and proposed regulations. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Basta, Director, National Marine Sanctuary Program (301) 713-3125.

Sincerely,

Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.  
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)  
Under Secretary of Commerce for  
Oceans and Atmosphere

THE ADMINISTRATOR



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